

# CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST

June 1994

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## BIRDS AT 61 HUNTER ST. APRIL/MAY 1994

The Rufous Whistler no longer sings, but the list is basically the same as the April list. In addition, a small group of Tasmanian Silvereyes made a brief visit to the bird bath, and in the absence of ripe figs this year, moved on.

A pair of Scarlet Robins has appeared occasionally, and the Eastern Spinebills sing constantly from the *Grevillea rosmarinifolia* which is covered with bloom at this stage. Before the rain came earlier in the month, the bird bath was very popular with groups of small birds e.g. Silvereyes, Yellow-rumped Thornbills, juvenile Wrens and Yellow-faced Honeyeaters, all splashing about together. Recently the T.V. feature "The Great Outdoors" has included segments on birdwatching in Queensland, and the expert ornithologist in charge pointed out that small birds like to bathe in groups - assuming they believe in safety in numbers.

The April bird list was

Galahs	Superb Blue-wrens (juv)	Silvereyes
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Yellow-rumped Thornbills	Sparrows
Crimson Rosellas	Red Wattlebird	Red-browed Firetails
Eastern Rosellas (pair)	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	Starlings
Grey Fantail	New Holland Honeyeaters	Grey Currawong (juv)
Rufous Whistler	Eastern Spinebills	Magpies (pair)
Blackbird	Spotted Pardalotes	Ravens

S.P.

## ADDITIONS TO THE PLANT LIST

**CALIFORNIAN STINKWEED** (*Navarretia squarrosa*). The plant was found growing at Campbells creek by Ian Higgins.

When a new plant is found, it is needs to be identified. The easiest (but perhaps the slowest) way is to press it, and send it to the National Herbarium in Melbourne. However, it's much more interesting to try to identify the plant, and then send it to the herbarium if it is rare or otherwise interesting.

There are several ways to identify an unknown plant.

The standard method is to work through the keys of a flora, first finding the family, and then the genus, and then the species. Once this is done, the identification is checked by reading through a description of the plant, and checking illustrations.



Often there are short cuts. In many cases, the family and sometimes the genus is obvious, and much of the hard work can be avoided.

The "time-honoured" method of looking through illustrations hardly ever works. If the plant is completely unknown, there are just too many illustrations to look through, and the best books are from New South Wales and South Australia, and so the plant may not be illustrated, or a different form is illustrated.

It is usually easy to tell whether the plant is a native or introduced. In this case, the plant had clusters of tiny flowers between green bracts, making a more or less spherical flower head, all with a spiny appearance. I had no idea of the family. But definitely a weed.

"Perhaps we could look through the weed book". So we opened "Weeds of Australia", more or less at random, and there on the first page opened was its illustration. Plant identification the easy way. Checking the description left no doubt that the identification was correct. And the family is *Polemoniaceae*, a family I had not before met.

Californian Stinkweed is a minor weed in some parts of Australia, and will perhaps become more common in this district. Plants like this give me a problem. It is pleasing to find a new plant for the district, and find another species that has overcome many difficulties and competitors, to grow here. But on the other hand it is a weed, and may become much more abundant, and crowd out more desirable species. So probably we should pull out any that we see. It is too late when there are thousands of them.

**APPLE OF SODOM** (*Solanum linnaeanum*). The plant was found growing in a property at Sutton Grange, and had not previously been seen by the property owner.

This species presented quite different problems. It had finished flowering, and no trace of flower or fruit remained. It had been picked about a week earlier, and had been left on the car seat, so it was very wrinkled and dry. It was covered, on leaves and stems, by rather ferocious looking prickles, and was thought to be a "thistle".

Plants without flowers are very difficult to identify, but the appearance of this was very distinctive. The prickles were rather rose-like, but symmetrical, and few plants have prickles like this on the leaf surfaces.

It certainly was not a thistle. Thistles are daisies, and have prickles on the edges of the leaves, or on the stems, or on the flowers. Sometimes all of these are prickly.

Many members of the potato family are densely spiny, and a browse through *Flora of N.S.W.* showed many plants with prickles similar to those of the specimen.

I boiled one of the dry leaves until it was soft, and so opened it out, to show a shape reminiscent of an oak leaf. The leaf was hairy, particularly on the undersurface, and many of the hairs were star-shaped.

So the specimen is probably Apple of Sodom. But without flowers or fruit it is difficult to positively identify it.

The thorns give it a ferocious appearance, and it would be best to pull it



up on sight (but allow one of any future population to flower, so that we can be sure of the identification).

**TUMBLEWEED** (*Amaranthus albus*). This was found growing at the Parker Street railway crossing, on an expedition to feed the ducks on Lake Joanna.

An easy identification. A casual look suggested a member of the saltbush family, but a look with a lens suggested the amaranthus family. Following the key soon led to *A. albus*.

Tumbleweed is a native of tropical America. Mature plants may break off, and tumble across open ground. There are several different "tumbleweeds". A saltbush species, *Salsola kali* is the usual tumbleweed of the Wild West.

## SANDON IN APRIL 1994

### Birds seen on the property were

Australasian Grebe  
White-faced Heron  
Brown Falcon  
Masked Lapwing  
Common Bronzewing  
Galah  
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo  
Crimson Rosella  
Eastern Rosella  
Red-rumped Parrot  
Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo  
Sthn Boobook Owl (h)  
Australian Owlet Nightjar  
Kookaburra  
Welcome Swallow  
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike  
Plane Robin  
Scarlet Robin  
Eastern Yellow Robin

Jacky Winter  
Golden Whistler  
Grey Shrike-thrush  
Restless Flycatcher  
Grey Fantail  
Willie Wagtail  
Wren  
Speckled Warbler  
Weebill  
Brown Thornbill  
Buff-rumped Thornbill  
Yellow-rumped Thornbill  
Striated Thornbill  
Varied Sittella  
White-throated Treecreeper  
Red Wattlebird  
Yellow-faced Honeyeater  
White-eared Honeyeater  
Yellow-tufted Honeyeater  
Fuscous Honeyeater  
White-plumed Honeyeater  
Brown-headed Honeyeater

White-naped Honeyeater  
Spotted Pardalote  
Striated Pardalote  
Silvereye  
European Goldfinch  
Red-browed Firetail  
Diamond Firetail  
White-winged Chough  
Australian Magpie-lark  
Magpie  
Grey Currawong  
Australian Raven

### Animals seen on the property were

Echidna  
Yellow-footed Antechinus  
Brush-tailed Possum  
House Mouse  
Black Rat?

Susanna Starr

## TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF LOCAL HILLS AND CREEKS.

1. Bendigo/Piccanniny Creek is a tributary of
  - (a) Campaspe River
  - (b) Loddon River
  - (c) Bullock Creek
  - (d) Murray River
  - (e) Kow Swamp
  - (f) none of these
2. The highest point in the City of Castlemaine is
  - (a) Kalimna Tourist Road (east of the Secondary College)
  - (b) Kalimna Point
  - (c) Norwood Hill
  - (d) Wattle Flat Forest
  - (e) Burke and Wills monument.

3. Bullock Creek is a tributary of
  - (a) Campaspe River
  - (b) Loddon River
  - (c) Bendigo Creek
  - (d) Murray River
  - (e) Kow Swamp
  - (f) none of these
4. The elevation of Castlemaine (Barker St at the post office) is
  - (a) less than 250 metres
  - (b) 250-300 metres
  - (c) 300-350 metres
  - (d) 350-400 metres
  - (e) more than 400 metres.
5. Where is the Great Dividing Range closest to Castlemaine?
  - (a) Near Cobaw
  - (b) At Mt Macedon
  - (c) Near Trentham
  - (d) Near Daylesford
  - (e) Due south (near Bullarto).
6. What is the name of the creek that flows parallel to the Pyrenees Highway between Chewton and Elphinstone, and has its course at the edge of Chewton Cemetery?
7. Name four major creeks that begin at the Mt Alexander range.
8. There are at least 10 reservoirs in the Loddon Catchment (some of them small). Name eight.
9. What is the name of the creek that flows through Moonlight Flat?
10. Place these mountains in order of height
  - (a) Mt Alexander
  - (b) Mt Tarrengower
  - (c) Mt Gaspard
  - (d) Black Hill (Kyneton)
  - (e) Mt Franklin
  - (f) Lawsons lookout
  - (g) Kangaroo Hill
  - (h) The Monk
11. Which are tributaries of the Loddon River?
  - (a) Middleton's Creek
  - (b) Fryers Creek
  - (c) Joyces Creek
  - (d) Jim Crow Creek
  - (e) Creswick Creek
  - (f) Tullaroop Creek
  - (g) Sandy Creek (Maldon)
  - (h) Middle Creek
12. On which streams are these falls? (Two easy ones to start)
  - (a) Coliban Falls
  - (b) Loddon Falls
  - (c) Trentham Falls
  - (d) Turpins Falls
  - (e) Queens Falls
  - (f) The Cascades
  - (g) Ellis Falls
  - (h) Foxy Falls
13. Which one of these hills is the odd one out? Why?
 

Mt Tarrengower	Mt Gaspard
Big Hill	Mt Koala
James Range	Nuggetty
Mt Franklin	Mt Prospect

[Answers on page 7]

## **FIRE PROTECTION AND KALIMNA**

Kalimna Reserve is a significant bushland area. Some of the features of the reserve are:-

- o Its proximity to Castlemaine, and its easy access. It has a variety of walking tracks.
- o The wide range of wildflowers.
- o The wide range of orchid species.

- o Its historical significance, with evidence of mining for gold and slate, and also of military activities.
- o The relatively low abundance of weed species. Shell Grass is widespread through much of the reserve, but most of the other weeds are localised, and mostly restricted to disturbed areas (where they are sometimes plentiful).

The number of species recorded for Kalimna is unusually high for such a small piece of bushland. Here are some figures for some of the local wildflower areas, many of which are much larger than Kalimna.

<u>Bushland area</u>	<u>Native Species</u>	<u>Orchid Species</u>
Kalimna Reserve	204	30
Muckleford Forest	210	34
Smith's Reef Forest	213	34
Mt Alexander	175	7
Taradale Bushland Reserve	127	21
Wattle Flat Forest	140	17
Walmer Wildflower Reserve	61	12

Some of the species present which are relatively uncommon in the district include:-

- Dwarf Aphelia (*Aphelia pumilio*) - 4 other district records.
- Crimson Spider-orchid (*Caladenia concolor*) - 4 other district records.
- Rabbit's Ears (*Thelymitra antennifera*) - 5 other district records.
- Lobed Wallaby-grass (*Danthonia auriculata*) - 2 other district records.
- Lanky Buttons (*Leptorhynchus elongatus*) - 2 other district records.
- Rough Mint-bush (*Prostanthera denticulata*) - 6 other district records.
- Wiry Mistletoe (*Amyema preissii*) - recorded for no other reserve.
- Grey Mistletoe (*A. quandang*) - recorded for no other reserve.
- Grevillea (*Grevillea alpina* x *G. rosmarinifolia*) - 2 other records.
- Bitter Cryptandra (*Cryptandra amara*) - 4 other district records.
- Common Woodruff (*Asperula conferta*) - 5 other district records.
- Hairy Speedwell (*Veronica calycina*) - only one other district record.

One of the features of the reserve, its close proximity to the built-up area of Castlemaine, also means that it could present a fire risk to the town, particularly as it is on the north side of the town (but fortunately, not on the north-west side).

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, as part of its overall fire strategy, gives a rating to each area of bushland. Areas of high priority get burned regularly. The aim is to keep ground litter below 8 tonne/hectare. A crown fire is not sustained with levels of litter below this. The time between burning would thus depend on the rate of growth, and would probably be about every 8 years.

The golf course provides a fire break now, and the obvious area to burn is the portion of the reserve east of the course (where it abuts the Tourist Road). This would leave the major part of the reserve to the north and south unburned.

Other portions of the reserve that would have a priority for burning are



-the small area just east of the high school (at present infested with gorse and other weeds), to help reduce the chance of a fire entering the reserve from here.

-along the major access roads, such as along the Hunter Street entrance to the park. Burning along roadsides makes it much safer for fire crews on fire days.

-along the western boundary between Doveton Street and Hunter Street. This area is weed infested.

-possibly along the tourist road east of Singleton.

Some of the access roads may also need to be widened. One of the results of the Ash Wednesday fires is that new fire trucks are larger, and less manoeuvrable, and so need wider tracks.

Members of this Club will have varying opinions about the desirability or otherwise of burning in the Kalimna Reserve. I think that the above proposals seem reasonable, and should largely satisfy conservation needs and the need to protect Castlemaine from bushfire.

It is certainly undesirable to have the whole of the Kalimna Reserve burned by a hot wildfire, as such could cause complete loss of the present mammal and reptile populations.

We should try to assess the effect of burning. Does it lead to loss of species, or greater diversity? Does it encourage or discourage weed populations? Does it affect erosion?

Perhaps we should have an excursion to the localities marked for burning, and start our assessment. We should consider making a photographic record of the park, and mark out areas in which to make a detailed count of the species present, and the abundance of each.

E. Perkins.

## **BIRD LIST FOR APRIL 9, 1994**

Birds recorded during the C.F.N.C. outing - exploring reserves

1. Gravel Reserve, Muckleford School Road.

2. Walmer Flora reserve

3. Benevolent Asylum Reserve, Muckleford (Block 1136)

Galah	1	Restless Flycatcher	12	Brown-headed H'eater	3
Musk Lorikeet	2	Grey fantail	1	Spotted Pardalote	1
Little Lorikeet	2	Weebill	1	Striated Pardalote	23
Crimson Rosella	3	Striated Thornbill	1	Diamond Firetail	2
Eastern Rosella	3	Red Wattlebird	3	White-winged Chough	1
Welcome Swallow	2	Little Friarbird	2	Aust Magpie-lark	2
Scarlet Robin	1	Noisy Miner	2	Dusky Woodswallow	2
Jacky Winter	1	Yellow-faced H'eater	3	Magpie	1
Golden Whistler	12	Yellow-tufted H'eater	3	Australian Raven	3
Rufous Whistler	2	Fuscous Honeyeater	2		
Grey Shrike-thrush	12	Wh-plumed H'eater	2		

## A WALK IN NORWOOD HILL

This is the most recent of the C.F.N.C. publications, and describes a short walk through the Norwood Hill bushland in the vicinity of Dead Horse Gully. The booklet can be obtained from the rack at the Library, or at a meeting of the Club. Cost is 50 cents.

## NOTES FOR MAY

**ADDITIONAL PLANT LISTS.** Lists for Mt Macedon, Crosby Forest and Knowsley Forest and Runnymede Flora Reserve have been added to the Club's plant list, under the "Miscellaneous areas" section.

**BRUSH-TAILED PHASCOGALE** was seen in Pollards Road, Elphinstone on the evening of May 27th. MH

**YELLOW-WINGED HONEYEATERS** have been abundant through the township over the past month. MO and others.

**FLAME ROBINS** A pair were seen at Little Hampton. SB

**AUSTRALIAN HOBBY** was seen on a tree during the excursion to Mt Cameron. It was observed chasing some birds, and itself being bothered by Noisy Miners.

**BANDED LAPWING.** A flock of 12 was seen near the road, near the Tullaroop Creek Crossing, again during the excursion to Mt Cameron.

**REGENT HONEYEATERS.** A pair were observed at Tullaroop dam, during the excursion at Easter, with the Bird Observers Club.

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**Answers to quiz.** Source: Survey maps. Heights estimated from survey maps.

- 1 Bendigo Creek/Piccaninny Creek flows into Kow Swamp.
- 2 Kalimna Tourist Road (380 m) is highest. Wattle Flat is close at 375m.
- 3 Bullock Creek flows into the Loddon about a kilometre north of Kerang.
- 4 Post Office is about 285 m. above sea level.
- 5 Closest point of the divide is due south, near Bullarto (37 km). Cobaw is close, and would be the nearest point for residents of Wesley Hill.
- 6 Sandy Creek. It joins Forest Creek near the Faraday turn-off.
- 7 Axe Creek, Myrtle Creek, Forest Creek and Barkers Creek.
- 8 Golden Point, Expedition Pass, Crocodile Reservoir (Fryerstown), Harcourt North or Barkers Creek, Laanacoorie, Tullaroop, Cairn Curran, Talbot, Evansford and McCay Reservoirs (which gets water from the Coliban system, but is in the Loddon Catchment, on Sandy Creek).
- 9 Moonlight Creek.
- 10 Order of height is Mt Alexander 736m; Kangaroo Hill 656m; Mt Franklin 635m; Black Hill 600m; Mt Tarrengower 571m; Mt Gaspard 496m; Lawsons Lookout 477m; The Monk 450m.
- 11 All are tributaries (but some now join the river at reservoirs).
- 12 Coliban (Coliban F), Loddon (Loddon F), Coliban (Trentham F), Campaspe (Turpins F), Campaspe (Queens Falls), Coliban (The Cascades), Coliban (Ellis F) and Granite Creek (a tributary of Coliban River)(Foxy F).
- 13 Mt Franklin is a volcano. The others are part of a metamorphic ridge.



## **CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM**

Excursions leave promptly at the times stated.

**Fri 10 Jun. BUSHWALKER'S VIEW OF TASMANIA.** Athol Dorman. Castlemaine Secondary College (Lawson Parade) at 8.00 pm.

**Sat 11 June. ENVIRONMENTAL SURVEY PART 2.** Leave from 13 Mostyn St (old SEC) at 1.30pm sharp. Leader Chris Morris.

**Thurs 17 June. BIRD WATCHING** Combined CFNC and U3A outing. Meet Continuing Education Car Park, Templeton Street, at 9.30 am. Leader: M Oliver.

**Thurs 24 June. BUSINESS MEETING.** 7.30 p.m. at 27 Doveton St. Note changed location.

**Fri 8 July. FOUR SEASONS IN HAMPSHIRE.,** plus **TIMBER FOR POLES** - short talk by Ivan Pellas. Monthly meeting at 8.00 pm. Please check location.

**Thurs 21 July. BIRD WATCHING.** Combined CFNC and U3A outing. Meet Continuing Education Car Park at 9.30 a.m.

**Fri 12 Aug. WESTERN AUSTRALIA.** Winston Huggins

**Sat 13 Aug. TENNYSON FOR BIRDS.** Excursion to the north. Leader R Mills. Leave 27 Doveton Street at 11.00 a.m. Take lunch and afternoon tea.

**Sun 4 Sept. LITTLE WHIPSTICK.** All day excursion to Mt Edgerton area with Ballarat F.N.C. Meet old SEC, Mostyn St at 9.30 a.m or corner of Daylesford - Geelong Rd, and old Western Hwy at 10.30am.

**Fri 9 Sept. NORTHERN AUSTRALIA.** Pat Bingham.

**Sun 2 Oct. VICTORIAN F.N.C. OUTING TO CASTLEMAINE,** taking in Kalimna, the Botanical Gardens and Kaweka. Meet at 1 to 11 at the Market.

**Sat 19 Nov. PEACOCK TRACK.** All day excursion to Talbot/Amherst area with Maryborough FNC

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**Committee:** B Maund (Pres), B Envall (VP), M Willis (Sec), G Broadway (Treas), K Turner (Prog), R Mills (PO and N/L Ed) E Perkins, S Parnaby, C Morris, K Meehan, S Bruton, and M Oliver.

This newslettter prepared by E. Perkins.

**Meetings.** Second Friday each month (except Jan) at 8.00 pm.. Check newsletter for location.

**Business Meetings** are held on the 4th Thursday (except Dec.) as advertised. Various locations. All members are invited to attend.

**Subscriptions 1994** Ordinary Membership: Single \$14, Family \$20  
Pensioner/Student: Single \$10, Family \$16. Supporting: \$25.

Newsletter posted: Membership + \$6

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**Castlemaine Field Naturalists' Club inc, P O Box 324, Castlemaine 3450**